

# Bible: exodus 20:4-6

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



The Old Testament ends with the prophets. These teachers provided insight on many issues facing Jews who were desperate to know God. Idolatry, social injustice and religious ritualism are three areas that are emphasized in their teachings and instilled in the minds and hearts of believers today. The prophets were great teachers who had much to say about God and the way man lived, social issues they faced, religious rituals they took part in, and their teachings are just as important today as they were in the past. Idolatry was a prominent issue among the Jews.

God confronted this problem early in the Bible in Exodus 20: 4-6. It is clear that following God requires complete and total attention on Him. The prophets considered this very an important issue. Consider Hosea who was commanded to marry an unfaithful wife to represent Israel's covenant unfaithfulness towards God. During this time, Israel was unwilling to worship God and sought to find their own idols to worship and bestow glory upon. Hosea taught through his marriage the extent of unfaithfulness the Jews had in their relationship with God.

Hosea compared Israel to spoiled grapes, a wild vine, a trained heifer, and a rebellious son and led into God to lay ruin to a large portion of His people causing the remnants to seek repentance before Him. Hosea, through using a marriage metaphor, showed the Jews how deep God's love for them truly was and still is. Hosea's example has modern implications. Because man can see how deeply God cares for them, there should be no reason to place importance of other things before their worship of Him. Yet, they do.

If society could focus more on God today, the issues the world faces would cease to exist. Because this is not the case, man continues to destroy themselves as their eyes and minds stray from God and their own idols. The prophet Jonah put the truth about idolatry bluntly in his prayer to God: “ Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. ” Amos was a prophet with a lot to say about social injustice. He preached of a coming judgment against Israel for (among other things) oppressing their people.

The Old Testament had charged the Israelites to take care of the disadvantaged and the poor, but there was a great disparity between the rich and the poor as Israel continued to reject God’s commands. Amos compared the wealthy women of Samaria to well fed cattle because they oppressed the poor while being consumed by selfish pleasures. Amos 5: 14-15 states: “ Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.”

The goal of Amos was to show that Israel was not keeping their charge to care for one another despite God’s command. This was due, in large part, to the people focusing on self interests. This sentiment is echoed in Micah where the wealthy conspired to steal the land of the needy. The world today mirrors Israel during the time of Amos. History has shown time again that wealth and personal selfishness blind man to the plight of the needy. In the United States, there is a huge disparity between the rich and the poor that requires personal conviction to change.

Man must stay focused on God and care for one another to bring blessing upon them. Man's negligence of the needy has led to homelessness and even suicides. Micah was a prophet who fought social injustice and idolatry like the other prophets. However, he offered a unique insight on what God looks for in man's glorification of Him. As Micah reveals, God was not primarily interested in Israel's sacrifices and offerings, no matter how extravagant they may have been, He was interested (and still is) in man's humble obedience to Him reflected through a lifestyle of mercy and justice.

The other prophets spoke to religious ritualism, but Micah put the concept simply and this concept is definitely true today. Man can go to church, sing the hymns, tithe their money, and hear a sermon, but God is most concerned with what man does in their obedience to Him and their receiving of His revelation. Church rituals are practically meaningless without obedience and positive action. James 2: 20 is very relevant in this respect: " But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? " The Prophets of the Old Testament deliver instruction, wisdom, and warning.

Man learned from them that idolatry takes the focus from God and puts the focus on self. Their teachings on social injustice show that God requires us to love and care for one another. Their teachings on ritualism show that God is more concerned with our obedience and reflection of Him than He is with offerings. Though the teachings of the prophets occurred many years ago, they are certainly relevant today. Man can learn a great deal from the teachings and warnings presented by these men. Praise God for His patience in man's stubborn ignorance.

As man began to drift away from God's own heart they began to create their own religion and beliefs. Many cultures have materialistic things that became their Gods! There social injustices in these cultures and many religious rituals. We all know the 10 commandments but the first commandment God said there will be no other Gods before me. A lot of people of that time were so far away of God and had so much wickedness in their hearts. In Ezekiel chapter eight it talks about an idolatry temple and God took him all around the area to show him how and why God's presence has left.

Ezekiel 8: 17-18 says " He said to me, " Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually provoke me to anger? Look at them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them. " Obviously after reading this you can tell how mad God was with all the Idol worshipping going along at the land.

As you continue to read the book of Ezekiel you read that the presence of God departed from the temple. God seem so disgusted with the people and right fully so we see how man put other idols in front of God. The word of the Lord always came to the prophet Ezekiel and God exposed him to many things that the people did. When God told Ezekiel " set your face toward the south; preach against and prophesy against" not only did God believe in Ezekiel but he had enough with these false Gods. It's so easy for our society to be drowned into having an Idol.

In my opinion our time period has more of a temptation of having Idols because of social media and it's easier to get the things you strongly desire to use as an idol, but with that we are seeing the people getting to know Jesus by the millions. It has it's pros and cons but I believe that we have so many things to guide us in the right path that it would help us to draw near to God. Amos' statements are daring for him to make because they directly challenge the generally accepted religious practices of his time.

Strong opposition to Amos developed at once when Amaziah, a priest, sent word to King Jeroboam that Amos was a dangerous character and should be expelled from the land. Although Amos insisted that he spoke only the words that Yahweh told him to proclaim, Amaziah told him to leave the country and never to prophesy again in the land of Israel. The prophecies of Amos mark an important point in the development of the religion of the Old Testament. The prophet was indeed a spokesman for Yahweh. That he was not speaking for himself or trying to please his listeners is made clear by the content of the message he delivered.

Critics have often maintained that the Old Testament Prophets created the god of whom they spoke out of their own imaginations. However, had these prophets done so, it does not seem at all likely that God would have spoken so critically of what was being done by the prophets' own people. Some of the rituals we in our time are like fasting (sun rise to sun set), acts of kindness, buying your way to heaven. Honestly if you can think of it being a ritual it probably is a ritual somewhere. Just like how it is today back then you the old days (bible) they were social injustice.

The book of Amos 5: 11 it says “ You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not their wine. I wish I can just say that it’s only in the Old Testament that dealt with social injustice but it happen in the New Testament as well. Thinking about social in justice reminds me the time when Joseph was captured by pharaoh and he was held captive for such a long time. In our society we have so much injustice. We have the very wealthy branch of people then we have the middle and the lower.

If you’re not in with a group of people then you are good enough to be around them. It seems like it is something you deal with in high school but not so much. I deal with it in the military. In the book of Micah chapter six verse eight it says “ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? ” what has our society has come to that they lost the love and compassion for people. We have become complacent that we forget to love our neighbor and I fall into this subject. We need to be a people who Love not hurt others